

Property: Take a peek around a high-tech Huf Haus – built in just four days



by Jo Knowsley

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BRENT and Rosemary Wilkinson often chuckle when they watch fraught home builders on television show *Grand Designs*, tearing their hair out over bust budgets, or lamenting that completion is months overdue. 'I just think, "They should have bought a Huf Haus,"' says Rosemary. 'Then they wouldn't have had these problems.'

The couple can be forgiven a hint of smugness. Their 6,373sq ft temple of steel, concrete, wood (all sustainable Douglas fir) and glass, with potentially six bedrooms and three bathrooms, was built in four-and-a-half days, delivered on time, and within budget.



Box set: Brent Wilkinson is proud of the home

The ground work on Harewood, their extraordinary, modern home on a hillside near Great Missenden in Buckinghamshire, started a couple of months earlier when 5,000 tonnes of chalk and earth were taken out of the hillside, and the foundations and concrete walls were sandwiched in place and secured with liquid cement, before being left for a month to dry.

When the house arrived on lorries from Germany, together with troops of construction workers, in May 2006, it was watertight in two-and-a-half days.



Outstanding in its field: The property is the only Huf Haus built over three levels

Today it is a gleaming testament to the ideology of Huf Haus, a German family company based in Hartenfels, 75km south of Bonn, which has operated for 104 years and has more than 100 homes in the UK.

It's also a tribute to the vision of the Wilkinsons, who first saw designs for the Huf Haus displayed at a National Homebuilding And Renovating Show at Alexandra Palace a decade earlier.

Then, a Hamptons estate agent in Great Missenden found them the perfect plot, with a rambling bungalow on 2.7 acres. The bungalow went and they signed up for the Huf Haus — travelling to Germany for an intense three days with the company to finesse the design, select their bespoke fittings and calculate their budget.



Impressive approach: The view from the driveway

Harewood is in magnificent grounds, landscaped by Chelsea Flower Show Gold Award garden designer Andy Sturgeon, who spent nine months on the project. There is a bluebell wood, tennis court, Koi pond and a wooden slatted path across the garden into the lofty and leafy mature beech and pine woodland.

Two enormous granite spinning top sculptures sit atop one part of the back garden, which has lawns of evergreen Spanish grass. Steps of giant granite slabs, each weighing a tonne, lead to another part of the garden.

But it is the house that is the star of the show, a monument to sustainability and quality. It has great bones, and loves showing them off — crisp stunning lines, soaring linear ceilings, and rooms that can be reconfigured to suit an owner's changing needs.

There's a 39ft-long heated pool in the basement with a clever phone system that calls engineers in Germany if anything goes wrong. An engineer drives to the UK once a year to service it. The ground floor has a Bulthaup kitchen (with Gaggenau appliances and two dishwashers) that leads seamlessly into the dining room, which has a pitched roof, fabulous skylights, and a covered outdoor terrace.



Slick: The house has a Bulthaup kitchen with Gaggenau appliances



Great outdoors: A covered terrace makes for a tranquil relaxation spot

There's a contemporary fireplace between the dining room and the family room while the spacious living room is nearby. Each room is bordered by sliding 7.6ft double-glazed glass sliding panels.



Touch of glass: Each room over three levels has 7.6ft double-glazed glass-sliding panels

Balconies and private terraces hug the house on the ground and the first floors, while on the roof the large overhang means rain never lashes against the windows.

At the heart of the house is a stunning double oak and glass staircase. 'Huf Haus calls it the Wilkinson staircase,' Brent says, 'as it's the only one they have built that goes over three levels.' The floors are engineered oak, and the walls and ceilings painted white throughout.



Spacious: The house features open-plan rooms with engineered oak floors and a stunning staircase

The master bedroom on the first floor spans the depth of the house. The bathroom alone is an astonishing 260sq ft with a Philippe Starck standalone bath, and large shower. In between that and the bedroom is an enormous walk-in dressing room area.

All bedrooms have external blinds and electronically operated blackout blinds. All floors have programmable underfloor heating, and the air con system can be set for individual rooms. Brent and Rosemary can turn the house 'on' or 'off' at the touch of a button.

'It's a Marmite house,' says Brent. 'You love it or hate it. We love the ease of living here and the wealth of natural light. We're going to miss it.'

The Wilkinsons are moving nearby where they're building another, smaller, Huf Haus. 'The one we're selling has all the toys,' Brent says, with only a hint of regret. 'But this new one will be lovely. And it's only 3,500sq ft.'

■ £4million, Hamptons, [hamptons.co.uk](https://www.hamptons.co.uk)



Flash splash: The heated pool has an automatic flaw detection system

- 6,373sq ft for Huf Haus for £4million
- Potentially six bedrooms — because of the design of the house, rooms can be rearranged — and three bathrooms
- A 39ft-long heated swimming pool, with a phone-monitoring system to detect any flaws.
- 2.7acres of grounds landscaped by Chelsea Flower Show award winning garden designer Andy Sturgeon
- A tennis court
- An independent double garage block
- Cinema room and gym

Everything you need to know about Huf Haus

Huf Haus is a German family-run company, set up in the 1970s, which creates distinctive, bespoke homes that are both luxurious and eco-friendly.

What makes them so special?

Huf is, essentially, a kit house. But each one is individually designed by the owner with a Huf architect, then the whole thing is prefabricated to the client's exact specifications in the state-of-the-art Huf factories near Bonn. The houses range from around 2,500sq ft to 6,000sq ft. All use a post-and-beam design, and there are no load-bearing walls.

Green dream

Huf have always been energy efficient and are striving to be close to zero carbon, with triple glazing that is more energy efficient than most walls, electricity generated through solar voltaic panels on the roof, and heat derived through ground or air-source pumps.

How do you get one?

You find the plot. Then Huf provides the architects, designers, planners, builders, even finance.

Afra Bindewald, marketing executive of Huf Haus, says: 'The process begins with a meeting for the client with Huf's UK team at the show house in Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey.'

'The client will receive an immersive tour of what it means to design and live in a Huf house and will be introduced to the use of glass and light and the technologies that are intrinsic to how a Huf operates. They will work with Peter Huf, chief architect for Huf in the UK.'

There is usually a period of six months to design and wait for planning permission, and another six months for production and assembly on site, so it's typically around 12 months from start to finish.

What do they cost?

planners, quantity surveyors, structural engineers and basic fit out. The cost of land, and site preparations are separate.

- huf-haus.com/en-uk/europa/london



The advertisement features a yellow background with a sunburst pattern. At the top center is the Metro logo, a white 'M' on a blue square with a red diagonal. Below the logo, the text 'Metro newspaper app' is written in a bold, black, serif font. Underneath that, in a smaller, black, serif font, is the phrase 'all wrapped up for your mobile or tablet'. At the bottom center is a green rounded rectangular button with the word 'Get' in white.



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